



State of Wisconsin
Jim Doyle, Governor

Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection
Rod Nilsestuen, Secretary

March 23, 2005

Mr. Dean P. Gagnon
Agriculture and Natural Resources Consultant
Department of Public Instruction
P.O. Box 7841
Madison, WI 53707

Dear Dean,

I'm writing to you in response to our phone visit last week about some concerns with the extended or summer contracts and how some schools are dealing with this in their budgets. As State Coordinator of Wisconsin's 76 state aided County and District fairs, I find it quite alarming as to what would happen to our county fair programs if our agricultural teachers' extended contracts were cut to the extent that they would not be covered for their involvement at the fair.

In making my 35 to 40 fair visit/inspections annually, I find that the agriculture teacher is very involved, either serving as a department superintendent, helping to clerk and set up entries and showing of classes, working in setting up livestock auctions, but more importantly than all of these items, is the educational process going on between the agriculture teacher and the over 5000 Junior exhibitors showing at our county fairs. These learning experiences are not just for the FFA members who are exhibiting, but for the benefit of the other youth the agriculture teacher makes contact with. Our State Government is constantly promoting education in our schools, well let me tell you, there is not a better form of education for youth than to have the learning experience of the showing of their project work at the county or state fair, learning many social skills and experiencing the negatives and positives of winning and losing. These are all experiences that help students mature.

The average person, fairgoer or not, may not realize that of the \$894,000 paid out to all exhibitors at county fairs, 75% of that is paid to Junior exhibitors (ages 5 to 19). As Junior exhibitors have to have an educational project so as to exhibit at the fair, it means that agriculture teachers and 4-H youth educators are all very involved in the education of 5,000 plus Junior exhibitors at county fairs.

The teaching/learning taking place with youth exhibiting at the fair, is extremely important, but another positive of the extended summer contract for agriculture teachers, are the great public relations this does for the agriculture program, the school district and community and for the constant reminder to the general public of all the fantastic things that our youth do to make our communities a great place to live.

Wisconsin has one of the more outstanding and noted county fair programs in North America. This is because the Wisconsin Assn. of Fairs, the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade & Consumer Protection, agriculture teachers and 4-H youth educators are all working together. State funding for fair premiums has been cut from \$650,000 in 1998 to \$250,000 in 2004. This has caused enough hardship on our state's fairs. Therefore, we certainly cannot afford to lose the educational benefits of our agriculture instructor's involvement through the use of "extended contract time" in the education of our youth.

Sincerely,

Bob Williams
Wisconsin County Fairs Coordinator

cc: Rod Nilsestuen, Secretary
Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection
Jayme Buttke, Secretary
Wisconsin Association of Fairs

Agriculture generates \$51.5 billion for Wisconsin